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There is no worst save that, from which no one good is derivable.

There is no fitness but that, which it is not possible to distort.

There is nothing distorted but that, which cannot be fitted.

There is nothing complete but that, wherein a defect is impossible.

There is no defect save that, from which no one benefit can be procured.

There is no benefit but where a contrast is not possible.

There can be no contrast except to evil.

There is no contrast to evil but God.

There is no God but he, than whom there can be none better.

There is nothing which cannot have its better, save the best of all.

There is no best of all except love.

There is no love but God ; God is love.

BARDIC PORTRAITS.

ANEURIN.

ALTHOUGH Aneurin was not a native of that part of the island, which is now called Wales, still the language in which he wrote, and the affinity of the stock, from which he was descended, with that of the Cymry fully entitle him to be numbered amongst their ancient bards. Accordingly he has ever been claimed by the Welsh as forming a part of that constellation of genius, which shed so much lustre on their literary annals during the sixth century.

Aneurin of Flowing Muse, as he has been called, and whom the Triads denominate also Monarch of the Bards, was one of the sons of Caw ab Geraint, a chieftain of the Ottadini, who occupied that part of the kingdom now called Northumberland,—a people, as above observed, of kindred extraction and speech with the Cymry*. Our bard was, most probably, born about the close of

* The Ottadini were perhaps descendants of the Lloegrwys, who, according to Triads viii. and ix. translated in the last number, settled in the northern parts of the kingdom. The Welsh name was Gododini, or Gododiniaid, implying the inhabitants of a region bordering on the coverts, whence the Romans formed their Ottadini, by rejecting the initial letter, and whence too Aneurin took the name of his poem.

the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century, and was one of a numerous issue, according to some accounts four and twenty, of whom the celebrated Gildas was also one, if indeed Gildas and Aneurin be not, as has been plausibly conjectured, two names for the same individual *

Of the early life of Aneurin we have no account; but, when arrived, as we may presume, at the age of manhood, we find him honourably engaged in the defence of his native country against the incursions of the Saxons. He fought, on this occasion, under the banners of Mynyddog Eiddyn, who commanded the Britons in the disastrous conflict of Cattraeth †, which, according to the authority of Aneurin, three only, himself being one, of three hundred and sixty-three British chieftains survived. His own safety he ascribes, like Horace on a similar occasion, to the sacredness of his poetical character ‡. The fatal result of this battle deprived Caw of his territory, and compelled him, with the small remnant of his children, to seek a refuge in Wales. Accordingly, he and a part of his family settled in Anglesey, where lands were allotted to them by Maelgwn, at that time Prince of Gwynedd; while Aneurin became an inmate of Catwg's college at Llanfai

* This is very reasonably presumed from the similarity of the names, one appearing to be merely a translation of the other, and from the still stronger circumstance of Gildas and Aneurin not being found together in any of the antient MSS., which enumerate the children of Caw. See the account of Aneurin in the Cambrian Biography.

† The force, that accompanied Mynyddog on this occasion, is described in the Triads as "one of the three pass-protecting clans of the Isle of Britain." Some copies have "Tair gosgordd *addwyn*;" (see Arch. of Wales, vol. ii. p. 69,) but the most probable reading is "Tair gosgordd *adry*," (ib. p. 8.) which may afford some clue to the particular nature of the battle of Cattraeth.

‡ To this he alludes in the following line:

"A minneu o'm guactvreu, guerth vy guenaut."

"And I, who was saved from the spilling of blood, as the reward of my fair song."

Mr. Davies, in his translation of the Gododin, (*Mythology and Rites of the Druids*, p. 341,) has most strangely perverted the meaning of this line, which he renders,

"And myself through my streams of blood, the reward of my song;"

thereby representing Aneurin as wounded, and wholly disregarding the beautiful poetical feeling, which the bard evinces on the occasion of his escape. But this is not the only instance, wherein this ingenious writer has mis-translated the Gododin, apparently, indeed almost avowedly, with a view to serve his extraordinary hypothesis: in his attachment to which he has not only overlooked the Triad, alluded to in the last note, but the testimony of the ancient bards.

thin, apparently the favoured resort of the genius and learning of that period.

It must have been here, that he formed that intimacy with Taliesin, to which he makes allusion in his *Gododin*: an instance of which may be seen in the following passage,—

Of the mead and of the horn,
And of the assembly of Cattraeth,
I, Aneurin, will frame,
What Taliesin knows,
A song of participation,
Which shall be offered by Gododin
Before the dawn of the day of toil *.

Taliesin likewise appears to bear testimony to this connection, when he thus speaks of his brother bard,—

I know the fame of Aneurin,
That celebrated genius,
Even I, Taliesin,
From the banks of the lake Ceirionydd.

It was, most probably too, in the propitious retreat of Catwg's College, that Aneurin wrote his famous *Gododin*, which has been described as the most ancient poem in Europe, after those of the classical writers †. And, if the genuineness of the effusions, ascribed to Ossian, be not satisfactorily proved, the *Gododin* must be entitled to this distinction. This, and another poem, called *The Odes of the Months*, are all that are now admitted to be extant of the works of this distinguished Bard, and are preserved under his name in the *Archaicology*. Aneurin is thought

* The original is as follows :

" O ved o vuelin,
O Gattræth wuin,
Mi a na, vi Aneurin,
Ys gwyr Taliesin,
Oveg cyvrenhin,
Neu chenig Ododin
Cyn gwawr dydd dilin."

Mr. Davies, whose translation, in this instance also, differs from that given above, observes upon the passage, that "from it as well as from the general tenour of the work it is evident, that the *Gododin* was not undertaken "as one single poem with a regular and connected design."—*Mythology and Rites of the Druids*, p. 356. Nothing of this kind, however, is evident, if the version, submitted in the text, be correct.

† Edward Llwyd, in his *Archæologia*, p. 254, gives A. D. 510 as the probable date of this production: but this appears a little too early.

to have spent the remainder of his days at Llanfeithin. The period of his death has been fixed about A. D. 570, when, according to two Triads, he was killed by Eidyn, son of Einygan, by the blow of an axe, which is therefore described as "one of the three accursed deeds of the Isle of Britain."

As it is intended to enter hereafter into a critical examination of the Gododin, a reference to its general characteristics is all that can be now required. This ancient poem, of which about nine hundred lines are preserved, is evidently in an imperfect state; a circumstance, which, with the peculiarity of its dialect, the errors of transcribers, and the obscurity occasioned by the lapse of thirteen hundred years, has necessarily thrown a shade over some parts of it. Yet, even through all these disadvantages, it is possible to trace many sublime and pathetic features, as well as that epic character, which, no doubt, originally belonged to it. And passages may be selected to justify the high estimation, in which it was formerly held, at a time, perhaps, when this opinion was founded on more accurate copies, and more perfect remains of this celebrated production.

The greatest portion of what is now preserved is occupied by elegiac tributes to the memory of the heroes who fell at Cattraeth. And an old commentary describes the number of stanzas to have been equal to that of the chieftains they were designed to commemorate, which must have extended the poem considerably beyond its present length. The metre, in which the Gododin is written, is a mixture of the lyrical and heroic, the latter of which bears a strong resemblance with the correspondent measure of the Italian poets, and particularly with that used by Tasso in his *Gierusalemme Liberata*: a circumstance, which seems to denote a kindred origin in the poetry of the two nations. In the epic character of the poem, to which allusion has already been made, an imitation of the Greek and Roman poets may clearly be traced, from which it may be inferred, that Aneurin, as well as Taliesin, was well versed in the classical literature of that age. Nor will it be too much praise to say, that, as a scholar and a poet, he formed one of its brightest ornaments*.

* *

* If his identity with Gildas could be proved, the propriety of this eulogium would be still more apparent.